POEMS

BY

HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

Sent to R. R. L. 9/15/30

REFERENCE LIBRARY OF
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
2 PARK STREET, BOSTON

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THE SHELVES
EXCEPT BY PERMISSION OF
THE LIBRARIAN

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

POEMS.

BY

HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

BOSTON:
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY.
NEW YORK: 11 EAST SEVENTEENTH STREET.
The Riverside Press, Cambridge.
1882.

Copyright, 1881,
By HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

All rights reserved.

The Riverside Press, Cambridge:
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

An April Madrigal 1
A Four-o'Clock 3
The Pine Tree 5
Clouds 7
Inside Plum Island 9
Witchwork 18
O Soft Spring Airs 21
Flower Songs:
I. The Violet 23
II. The Hyacinth 25
III. The Rose 26
IV. The Lily 28
Fancies:
I. Snow Squall 29
II. A Snow-Drop 30
III. At Dawn 31
IV. Maytime 31
V. September 32
A Flower Piece 34
Evanescence 38

CAVETE, FELICES 39
HERE AND THERE 40
MOTHER MINE 41
ON THE BUST OF CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN . . 44
SARAH HILDRETH BUTLER 46
PEACE 53
THE LONELY GRAVE 55
BETWEEN THE GRAVES 59
THE GRANADAN GIRL'S SONG 61
THE BLUE 65
OUR NEIGHBOR 67
MAYFLOWERS 69
DAYS OF REST 70
MAGDALEN 72
IN THE CARAVAN 74
WITNESSES 76
ALIVE 78
A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT 80
CANDLEMAS 81
BLIND 82
PALMISTRY 84
LULLABY 85
FIRST AND LAST 86
SECOND SIGHT 87
UNDER THE BREATH 89
UNDER THE SNOW-DRIFTS 90
SONG 91
OAK HILL 92

Loss and Gain 93
An Old Song 94
The Birthday 96
Marion 98
The Nun and Harp 101
Two 103
Godspeed 104
Longing 106
A Sigh 107
A Wreck 108
In Summer Nights:
I. Music in the Night 109
II. Boat Song 111
III. Intermezzo 111
IV. Winds from Sea 112
V. Night in Texas 113
VI. Lovers 115
VII. Under the Window 116
VIII. In the Garden 117
IX. Ballad 119
X. Fantasia 120
XI. Song 120
XII. Listening 121
XIII. Nocturne 122
XIV. Over Again 123
Sheltered 126
The Old Poet and his Wife 128
Love in Idleness.—I. 133

ONLY A LEAF.—II. 134
A LOVER'S GARDEN 135
AT AN OLD GRAVE 138
LEFT ASHORE 143
TWAIN 147
ALI 149
AGATHA'S SONG 157
ESHER'S SONG 160
MY OWN SONG 162
MEASURE FOR MEASURE 164
VALENTINE'S DAY 165
THE RIVER 168

POEMS.

AN APRIL MADRIGAL.

In those charmed ages, dark and rich
  With mystery, when, sailing first,
The mariner on unknown seas
  And summer shores bewildered burst, —
He planted there some royal sign,
And claimed the place by right divine:

So I, who came when April skies
  Lighten the land and get me glee,
And flushed with sleep the fair earth turns
  Her rosy side to welcome me,
Claim the glad month my fief and fere,
And take possession of the year.

I take possession of the year:
  Yet as a viceroy I hold,

The bloom from off the sea I strip,
  The freshness from the budding mould,
All fragrances, all balms that be,
My Sovereign, I hoard for thee!

A FOUR-O'CLOCK.

Ah, happy day, refuse to go!
Hang in the heavens forever so!
Forever in mid-afternoon,
Ah, happy day of happy June!
Pour out thy sunshine on the hill,
The piny wood with perfume fill,
And breathe across the singing sea
Land-scented breezes, that shall be
Sweet as the gardens that they pass,
Where children tumble in the grass!

Ah, happy day, refuse to go!
Hang in the heavens forever so!
And long not for thy blushing rest
In the soft bosom of the west,
But bid gray evening get her back
With all the stars upon her track!
Forget the dark, forget the dew,
The mystery of the midnight blue,

And only spread thy wide warm wings
While summer her enchantment flings!

Ah, happy day, refuse to go!
Hang in the heavens forever so!
Forever let thy tender mist
Lie like dissolving amethyst
Deep in the distant dales, and shed
Thy mellow glory overhead!
Yet wilt thou wander, — call the thrush,
And have the wilds and waters hush
To hear his passion-broken tune,
Ah, happy day of happy June!

THE PINE TREE.

Before your atoms came together
I was full-grown, a tower of strength,
Seen by the sailors out at sea,
With great storms measuring all my length,
Making my mighty minstrelsy,
Companion of the ancient weather.

Yours! Just as much the stars that shiver
When the frost sparkles overhead!
Call yours as soon those viewless airs
That sing in the clear vault, and tread
The clouds! Less yours than theirs —
The fish-hawks swooping round the river!

In the primeval depths, embowering
My broad boughs with my branching peers,
My gums I spilled in precious drops —
Ay, even in those elder years
The eagle building in my tops,
Along my boughs the panther cowering.

Beneath my shade the red man slipping,
Himself a shadow, stole away;
A paler shadow follows him!
Races may go, or races stay,
The cones upon my loftiest limb
The winds will many a year be stripping;

And there the hidden day be throwing
His fires, though dark the dead prime be
Before the bird shake off the dew.
Ah! what songs have been sung to me;
What songs will yet be sung, when you
Are dust upon the four winds blowing!

CLOUDS.

HIGH in the rare crepusculine ether,
Cirrus, and fine, and fading fair,
A purpler film leaves all beneath her,
And hovering where remoter bounds are bare,
Dreams of the vanished light on so serene a height,
And shreds her vapor into ragged air.

Flamed she erewhile on some sunset's bosom,
Scarlet and piled with fleeciest snow,
Crowning the side-sky with ruddy blossom —
To suffer so her sanguine ardors go,
And hang, with meek surrender abandoning her splendor,
Like nothing but the breath of one below?

One long sad cloud that girts the quiet even,
With half a rosy reflex broods,
In doubt if this be earth or that be heaven,
And with wild moods stolen from strange solitudes
Still drifts on slumberous tides, and in a hushed heart hides
Low tunes and melancholy interludes.

O changing clouds, that drop the great sun's glory,
Dimly through gloom to draw your wings,
Till over you stars make the spaces hoary,
And ancient springs to flood your passing brings —
Our lives are vapors, too, we gather like the dew,
And fade and float wherever fortune flings.

INSIDE PLUM ISLAND.

We floated in the idle breeze,
With all our sails a-shiver;
The shining tide came softly through,
And filled Plum Island River.

The shining tide stole softly up
Across the wide green splendor,
Creek swelling creek till all in one
The marshes made surrender.

And clear the flood of silver swung
Between the brimming edges,
And now the depths were dark, and now
The boat slid o'er the sedges.

And here a yellow sand spit foamed
Amid the great sea meadows,
And here the sleeping waters gloomed
Lucid in emerald shadows.

While, in their friendly multitude
Encamped along our quarter,
The host of hay-cocks seemed to float
With doubles in the water.

Around the sunny distance rose
A blue and hazy highland,
And winding down our winding way
The sand hills of Plum Island —

The windy dunes that hid the sea
For many a dreary acre,
And muffled all its thundering fall
Along the wild South Breaker.

We crept by Oldtown's marshy mouth,
By reedy Rowley drifted,
But far away the Ipswich bar
Its white caps tossed and shifted.

Sometimes we heard a bittern boom,
Sometimes a piping plover,
Sometimes there came the lonesome cry
Of white gulls flying over.

Sometimes, a sudden fount of light,
A sturgeon splashed, and fleeting
Behind the sheltering thatch we heard
Oars in the rowlocks beating.

But all the rest was silence, save
The rippling in the rushes,
The gentle gale that struck the sail
In fitful swells and gushes.

Silence and summer and the sun,
Waking a wizard legion,
Wove as we went their ancient spells
In this enchanted region.

No spectral care could part the veil
Of mist and sunbeams shredded,
That everywhere behind us closed
The labyrinth we threaded.

Beneath our keel the great sky arched
Its liquid light and azure;
We swung between two heavens, ensphered
Within their charmed embrasure.

Deep in that watery firmament,
With flickering lustres splendid,
Poised in his perfect flight, we saw
The painted hawk suspended.

And there, the while the boat-side leaned,
With youth and laughter laden,
We saw the red fin of the perch,
We saw the swift menhaden.

Outside, the hollow sea might cry,
The wailing wind give warning,
No whisper saddened us, shut in
With sunshine and the morning.

Oh, far, far off the weary world
With all its tumult waited,
Forever here with drooping sails
Would we have hung belated!

Yet when the flaw came ruffling down,
And round us curled and sallied,
We skimmed, with bubbles on our track,
As glad as when we dallied.

Broadly the bare brown Hundreds rose,
The herds their hollows keeping,
And clouds of wings about our mast
From Swallowbanks were sweeping.

While evermore the Bluff before
Grew greenly on our vision,
Lifting beneath its waving boughs
Its grassy slopes Elysian.

There, all day long, the summer sea
Creams murmuring up the shingle;
There, all day long, the airs of earth
With airs of heaven mingle.

Singing we went our happy way,
Singing old songs, nor noted
Another voice that with us sang,
As wing and wing we floated.

Till hushed, we listened, while the air
With music still was beating,
Voice answering tuneful voice, again
The words we sang repeating.

A flight of fluting echoes, sent
With elfin carol o'er us—
More blithe than bird-song in the prime
Rang out the sea-blown chorus.

Behind those dunes the storms had heaped
In all fantastic fashion,
Who syllabled our songs in strains
Remote from human passion?

What tones were those that caught our own,
Filtered through light and distance,
And tossed them gayly to and fro
With such a sweet insistence?

What shoal of sea-sprites, to the sun
Along the margin flocking,
Dripping with salt dews from the deeps,
Made this melodious mocking?

We laughed—a hundred voices rose
In airiest fairiest laughter;
We sang—a hundred voices quired
And sang the whole song after.

One standing eager in the prow
  Blew out his bugle cheerly,
And far and wide their horns replied
  More silverly and clearly.

And falling down the falling tide,
  Slow and more slowly going,
Flown far, flown far, flown faint and fine,
  We heard their horns still blowing.

Then, with the last delicious note
  To other skies alluring,
Down ran the sails; beneath the Bluff
  The boat lay at her mooring.

Came they, these subtile powers, to tell
  The poet, at their revels,
How blest to live delightful days
  Among these meadow levels?

Blest as to lead his lonely thought
  Above horizons vaster,
Close to the stars, transfigured on
  The awful heights of Shasta!

Dreaming, he loitered still, we thought,
Within his dream's bright portals;
We trifled with the hour, but he
Had been with the immortals!

In vain, at night, we sought that sound —
Stars over us and under
Through all that watery wilderness
Building a word of wonder;

Or groping, when the light-house spark
Its witch-dance kept before us,
Or when the unseen moon distilled
Her deathly glamour o'er us;

Or when, the twin lamps of their towers
Emerald and ruby gleaming,
Across the shadowy Merrimack
The channel lights came streaming, —

In vain our lingering halloo,
Our roundelay untiring,
No silver cry chimed far or nigh
Of all that silver quiring.

Oh, never since that magic morn
  Those strains the boatman follows,
Or piping from the sandy hills,
  Or bubbling from the hollows!

Yet long as summer breezes blow,
  Waves murmur, rushes quiver,
Those warbling echoes everywhere
  Will haunt Plum Island River!

WITCHWORK.

Undiné and all her troop
Are out to-night; the tides are high;
Like spray far thrown across the moon,
The clouds go sailing through the sky.
The showers sweep down and shroud the world,
On darkling rainbows skim afar;
The brooks burst up beside the way,
And great winds strip some naked star, —
Great winds, mad winds, winds of March,
That, streaming from the void and vast,
Make mortals feel the impotence
Of atoms borne before the blast.
But Ariel holds them in his leash;
All the Wild Ladies follow him;
The great Ghandarvas blow their tunes
From silver peaks and valleys dim;
Witch and warlock, imps and elves,
The urchins of the misty dale,
And echoes mocking all the stir,

Ride down the long gust of the gale!
Hark! do you catch the Banshee's cry?
That is the hammering trolls you hear!
Turn not too swiftly, lest you start
The Lurley singing in your ear!
Powers of earth and powers of air
Are all abroad; the night is quick
With strange and subtile sorceries,
Bred of the storm, and swarming thick
As bees about a blooming branch,
Honey dripping, dew besprent,
Steeped in sunshine underneath
The blue of some great morning's tent.
Each enchantment of the sphere,
Blown from the sea and blown from shore,
Works its wild will and wizardry
While darkness wraps the gay uproar,
Till rosy dawn shall set the spell;
When, lo! the bare boughs of yestreen
Confess the magic of the March,
And wave such veils of callow green
As clad, in the old mystic tale,
The rods that Jannes and Jambres throw,
To break in blossom as they fall

Before the feet of Pharaoh!
For the fierce tempest, with its shock
Of wind and sleet that midnight cloaks,
Like some old thaumaturge who makes
A mighty marvel, now evokes, —
The violet on her dewy locks,
The sunlight on her lifted wing,
The clouds of incense floating by, —
The Apparition of the Spring!

O SOFT SPRING AIRS!

Come up, come up, O soft spring airs,
  Come from your silver shining seas,
Where all day long you toss the wave
  About the low and palm-plumed keys!

Forsake the spicy lemon groves,
  The balms and blisses of the South,
And blow across the longing land
  The breath of your delicious mouth.

Come from the almond bough you stir,
  The myrtle thicket where you sigh;
Oh, leave the nightingale, for here
  The robin whistles far and nigh!

For here the violet in the wood
  Thrills with the fullness you shall take,
And wrapped away from life and love
  The wild rose dreams, and fain would wake.

For here in reed and rush and grass,
  And tiptoe in the dusk and dew,
Each sod of the brown earth aspires
  To meet the sun, the sun and you.

Then come, O fresh spring airs, once more
  Create the old delightful things,
And woo the frozen world again
  With hints of heaven upon your wings!

FLOWER SONGS.

THE VIOLET.

Soar, solemn skies, your splendid height,
And then in flashing darkness bend,
Wrap the sweet earth about with night,
And wide dim fields from end to end,
Lying far off and low,
Serenely with your brooding mystery blend.

Slumber, sweet earth! Thy lofty shade
Glows with the shining phantom dreams
That haunt thee nightly. Music made
By burdened boughs and rustling streams,
Now falling hushed and slow,
Remotely lapped in dewy silence seems.

And ever blow between, faint air,
Blow with light, hesitating breath

From melancholy places where
Perpetual fragrance wandereth.
O'er grave and garden blow,
Over warm life, and over lonely death.

And while the murmur rang, the sudden stir
Of branches tost in a tumultuous gust
Of showers and sweetness, darkling, swept the brow
And passed. And through the fluted melody
There breathed that sound that silence listens to —
The crickets chirping their unbroken strain
On th' hill-side, in the black warm summer night,
Thrill of ethereal tone, as if were heard
The rustle of the great orb's wings through space,
What time the brede of stars its lustre floats
In self-poised circles, and the dusk is deep.

And then, as when across one's rarest dream,
Just drawing off from the rich dregs of sleep,
A cheery cry comes, and a broken tune,

And in the covert of their odorous depths
The robins shake their wild wet wings and flood
The shallow shores of dawn with music, till
The world is rosy, — so another voice
Stole toward me, and I saw the hyacinth
With its white helmet part the sun-soaked sod.
And heard, as if from out the bells that wreathe
Its spire of piercing perfume dropped the tones
Like rain-drops tinkling in a way-side pool.

THE HYACINTH.

On topmost twigs when morning burns
And lights his trembling fires,
When from his wing the glad bird spurns
The gray, and with his carol yearns
And to heaven's gate aspires, —
The Maker looks upon his world
That puts her beauty bare,
All freshly, fragrantly impearled
Beneath the tender air, —
Looks on his soft and gleaming world
And smiles to find her fair.

Then waken, waken,
The earth has taken
Into the sunshine her wondrous way;
Then waken, waken,
The showers are shaken
Loose from the leaves and melt away,
Lost in the beautiful light of day!

Here the clear singing of the joyous sprite
Startled the echoes of that underworld
Where buds lie sleeping: straight the silent bush
Beside me quivered in the happy light;
The red sap mounted along stem and spray,
In countless hurried convolutions whirled
To break at once into the perfect flower —
The perfect flower — proud was the song she sung.

THE ROSE.

I am the one rich thing that morn
Leaves for the ardent noon to win;
Grasp me not, I have a thorn,
But bend and take my being in.

The dew-drop on my bosom gives
  The whole of heaven to searching eyes,
Only he who sees it lives,
  And only he who slights it dies.

Ah, what bewildering warmth and wealth
  Gather within my central fold!
Love-lorn airs of happy health
  Hive with the honey that I hold.

This dazzling ruddiness divine
  Shrouds spicy savors deep and dear,
Passion's sign and countersign,
  The inmost meaning of the sphere.

Petal on petal opening wide,
  My being into beauty flows —
Hundred-leaved and damask-dyed —
  Yet nothing, nothing but a rose!

And shaking off a sudden passionate tear
The rose ceased warble, and in an ecstasy
Shed all her lovely leaves around my feet
And stood discrowned.

Then gently was I ware
Of a pure breath from that delicious hour
When day sweeps all her glory after her
To fresh horizons,—rapt and holy tone
Where lingered yet the note that haply fell
From seraphs leaning o'er the battlements
Of shining tower and rampart far above,
And ever in their idlesse singing praise.

THE LILY.

Lift thine eyes, against the deepening skies
All the sacred hills like altars glow,
Waiting for the hastening sacrifice
Ere the evening winds begin to blow.

Lift thy heart, and let the prayer depart
To meet the heavenly flame upon the height,
Till all thy shadows to effulgence start,
And the calm brain grow clear with still
delight!

FANCIES.

I. SNOW SQUALL.

FALL thickly, dallying snow-flakes, fall,
Nor longer sport in dizzy showers;
The earth is waiting for your kiss,
You phantoms of the flowers!

When, orbed in spicy dews, you rolled
From leaf to leaf along those hours
Sweet with the clethra's breath, you learned
The secret of the flowers.

Transfigured in your frosty bloom,
Now like a wraith the pine tree towers,
And on his savage boughs you hang
Garlands of ghostly flowers.

But sink into the sod, and wait
The enchantments of this sphere of ours,
And back to sunshine shall you burst,
Branches of living flowers!

II. A SNOW-DROP.

Only a tender little thing,
So velvet soft and white it is;
But March himself is not so strong,
With all the great gales that are his.

In vain his whistling storms he calls,
In vain the cohorts of his power
Ride down the sky on mighty blasts —
He cannot crush the little flower.

Its white spear parts the sod, the snows
Than that white spear less snowy are,
The rains roll off its crest like spray,
It lifts again its spotless star.

Blow, blow, dark March! To meet you here,
Thrust upward from the central gloom,
The stellar force of the old earth
Pulses to life in this slight bloom.

III. AT DAWN.

A gush of bird-song, a patter of dew,
A cloud, and a rainbow's warning,
Suddenly sunshine and perfect blue, —
An April day in the morning!

Magical, autumn hazes are,
And rare is your summer weather,
With its purple midnight throbbing far
Over lovers clasped together;

But dearer to me these daring flowers
The passionate noontide scorning,
This gladsome slipping of shining showers,
This April day in the morning!

IV. MAYTIME

A mist of stars, a glimmering veil
Before the ancient throne of night;
A planet like a sentinel
Upon the outer height.

Far dusky deeps, and wide still air,
Where fainting fragrance rolls along;
A bird that warbles in his dream
Some thrill of broken song.

Thick fruit-flowers languishing for light
Around us in the perfect gloom;
And, as we wait, far off and low,
The distant breakers' boom.

Ah! among all delicious nights,
Give me this hour's transcendent swoon;
Enchanted song, enchanted hush,
And May without a moon!

V. SEPTEMBER.

Why does the wind at the casement sigh
In the gloom of the gray wet dawn?
The light is lost from the sea and sky,
And the rose is gone!

Gone — and the sunshine after her,
Color and fire and perfumed dew:

Only the lonely wind may stir
In the place she knew.

Then follow, O wind, the happy ways
Whither thy blushing love has fled:
Round her are lustres of perfect days
And all sweetness shed.

Follow — for desert sky and sea
Are dim with the rush of the rain:
Summer is dead, and the day would be
Alone with its pain!

A FLOWER PIECE.

WANDERING of late beside a northern shore
That longed for summer, and the wild beach
grass,
And dip of oar, and plash of pearly feet,
And happy laughter on its lonely sands,
I heard a young voice caroling some song,
Nor knew I was in elf-land while I heard.
It sang, and slowly trembled into rest —
Slowly, because the earth was loth to leave
The high melodious dalliance.
But before
The singing fled to silence, eagerly
A rustle and a rush of flying wings,
Like leaflets blown before a frosty blast
When woods stand shivering, caught and bore
it off,
Lost in the airy clamor of their flight.
And, as they went, wild music followed them;
The tune the breeze winds in and out the
grass,

The tune to which the clouds and sunshine play
O'er slopes of blushing clover — faint at first,
With many a fluttered echo frolicking,
It fell its windy way — then loitered down,
With lingering cadence of a long delay,
Lightly as in the tenderest deeps of even
The yellow blossom of the new moon drops
Below the west that waits it.
'T was the voice
Of all the elves of all the flowers that blow,
Flocking to find the Spring, who slumbered yet,
Nursed by the blue-eyed April. Willow plumes,
Harebell, and cowslip, and anemone;
The silver cinquefoil, and the columbine
That bursts, a lance of hoarded light, from earth,
And swings its red flame on the shining tip;
The purple vetches, washed by salt sea sprays;
The frail convolvulus, that, ere the year
Is at the flood, leagues with the building bird,

And the rude way-side tangles o'er her nest.
Precious to plot and pleachéd alley, too,
The mimic nun of the snow-drop, and the friar
Dwelling within the hooded aconite;
The maidens of the pale chrysanthemum,
The royal lady of the proud and fair
Japonica, and ev'n the merry mites
That balance on the trumpet-flower's edge,
Tippling their horns of honey. And with them,
All the delightsome things of old romance —
The royal violet, and Sappho's rose;
The fleur-de-lis, the flower of chivalry;
The lotus, born of the eternities,
Holding immortal ichor — hovered there,
Hovered a moment, chiming in one strain,
Then falling, failing, ever on the wing,
Sought other skies.
And I, upon the shore,
Watched a far bark into a bank of mist,
A dim blue bank built up along the sea;
The bark still sailing, hull and tapering spire
A line of light, silverly sheathed about

With deepening vapors, slowly gliding on
To denser shadow, slow and ever slower,
Fainting and fading, till a phantom craft
Was hid in sad recesses of the cloud,
A vanished apparition — and above,
Upon the pallor of a peaceful sky,
Fair Hesper, like a flower, bloomed out in heaven.

EVANESCENCE.

WHAT's the brightness of a brow?
What's a mouth of pearls and corals?
Beauty vanishes like a vapor,
Preach the men of musty morals!

Should the crowd then, ages since,
Have shut their ears to singing Homer,
Because the music fled as soon
As fleets the violet's aroma?

Ah, for me, I thrill to see
The bloom a velvet cheek discloses,
Made of dust — I well believe it!
So are lilies, so are roses!

CAVETE, FELICES.

The orchards all a-flutter with pink,
Robins' twitter, and wild bees' humming,
Break the song with a thrill, to think
How sweet is life when summer is coming.

The maple burning a scarlet leaf,
The melting haze, and the south wind blowing,
Charm the sting from the touch of grief,
For sweet is life when summer is going.

Oh, sweet, so sweet that the heart grows chill,
Knowing the clouds will sweep the clover,
The leaf will redden, the bird sing still,
But for us, how soon it will all be over!

HERE AND THERE.

O GLAD is youth with the brow of Helen,
The mouth where Lalage's kisses cleave;
O fair is the lovely world to dwell in,
Fair to dwell in, and fair to leave!

Blest, blest the years when a baby's laughter
Fills with music the flying day,
And passionate yearnings go trembling after
The rosy flame in that fragile clay.

Delicious life! But when death shall capture
Soul and sense from its yielding years,
Dearer that hour whose bursting rapture
Gives us the freedom of the spheres!

MOTHER MINE.

WHEN by the ruddy fire I spelled,
In one old volume and another,
Those ballads haunted by fair women,
One of them always seemed my mother.

In storied song she dwelt, where dwell
Strange things and sweet of eld and eerie,
The foam of Binnorie's bonny mill-dams,
The bowing birks, the wells o' Wearie.

All the Queen's Maries did she know,
The eldritch knight, the sisters seven,
The lad that lay upon the Lomonds
And saw the perch play in Lochleven.

Burd Helen had those great gray eyes
Their rays from shadowy lashes flinging;
That smile the winsome bride of Yarrow
Before her tears were set to singing.

That mouth was just the mouth that kissed
Sir Cradocke under the green wildwood;
Fair Rosamond was tall as she was,
In those fixed fancies of my childhood.

And when she sang — ah, when she sang!
Birds are less sweet, and flutes not clearer —
In ancient halls I saw the minstrel,
And shapes long dead arose to hear her!

Darlings of song I've heard since then,
But no such voice as hers was, swelling
Like bell-notes on the winds of morning,
All angelhood about it dwelling.

No more within those regions dim
Of rich romance my thoughts would place her,
Her life itself is such a poem
She does not need old names to grace her.

Long years have fled, but left her charm
Smiling to see that years are fleeter,
Those ballads are as sweet as ever,
But she is infinitely sweeter.

For love, that shines through all her ways,
  Hinders the stealthy hours from duty,
A soul divinely self-forgetful
  Has come to blossom in her beauty.

While the low brow, the silver curl,
  The twilight glance, the perfect features,
The rose upon a creamy pallor,
  Make her the loveliest of creatures.

Now with the glow that, on the face
  Like moonlight on a flower, has found her,
With the tone's thrill, a faint remoteness,
  Half like a halo hangs around her.

Half like a halo? Nay, indeed,
  I never saw a picture painted —
Such holy work the years have rendered —
  So like a woman that is sainted!

ON THE BUST OF CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

A SECRET of the spheres, long hid
In waiting silence, finds a form,
Where elemental force has bid
A great serenity out of storm.
Here all imperial seraph sort,
And bright ascendencies, have wrought
And shaped themselves to perfect choice;
And in full throbs of starry song,
Wild music of the vast, along
Whose verge the rolling echoes throng,
These marble lips might find a voice.

Oh, like some rare and wondrous shell
Of shifting hues and lustrous dyes,
That takes the sun in every cell
With colors that eclipse the skies,
The soul for which the sculptor sought,
The soul that here the sculptor caught,

And sealed in stone eternally!
For never does the shell forget
The tide with which its lips were wet,
And far withdrawn it murmurs yet
The hoary burden of the sea.

And yet the hidden meaning here
Interprets neither sky nor sea,
Save as they round the earthly sphere
With kinship of infinity.
This nature holds the common sod's,
Holds heaven and sunshine like a god's,
Touched clay, and only soared the higher!
Soared like a flame that springs alone
Into the vast and azure zone;
And whoso holds the carven stone
Carries an urn of sacred fire!

SARAH HILDRETH BUTLER.

I.

Do you remember, O you wondrous woman,
In those dim regions where you wander now,—
You, who were always something more than human,
With the large light upon your lofty brow,—
Do you remember all the hours we spent,
All the gay mornings when the tremulous hazes
Swathed the two silver rivers, and the heights
Of pillared Arlington shone through their mazes?
Do you remember the delightful nights
On the proud hill-top, while the city lay
Sparkling below us with her swarming lights,
We like the spirits of some other day,—
Do you remember, you so far away?

II.

What woods were those where, in the April weather,
Dell under dell of darkness and of dew,
Along the Rock Creek paths we rode together!
Over us swept the eagles, swept the blue;
Under us, in green gloom of ferns and foam,
The brook glanced. Here the red-bud broke in blushes,
And like a press of moonbeams far abroad
The dogwood lit the forest glades. The thrushes
Answered our songs unseen. The horses trod
In measure to our music, that glad noon,
On beds of the wild heart's-ease velvet shod.
Singing, we sped, and recked not in our tune
Of storm, eclipse, and the dark interlune!

III.

Whether the ford splash round me now, or slowly
I loiter up the great hill-side, to rest
Where some old earthwork hides its melancholy

In dew-meshed cobwebs quivering on its
breast,
As the rank grass shakes with the wings that
skim
From coverts in the blossoming embrasure,
Your conscious presence follows. I am stirred
To see your shape upon the sunlit azure,
To hear the ringing of the voice once heard
In stories of those battailous days when you
Stood with that Lion Heart, whose flaming
word
The shackle from the slave forever threw,
While your pulse beat the strain his trumpets
blew!

IV.

Again, I mark the mad scream of the break-
ers
Off Hatteras, and on the slant wet deck,
Amid the wild waste of the whitening acres
Of awful waters leaping for the wreck,
Calm as upon your summer gallery
I see you stitching on the silken pennon;
Firing the faint and waiting hearts of men
That in transfiguring flash and smoke of can-
non

Had sprung to fate's embraces. And again,
In the far South, where rolls the turbid tide
Through the morass that plague has made its den,
In veiling vapors creeping far and wide,
I see the yellow death before you hide.

v.

Oh, fair these streets of palaces, with glory
Of columns in long flying lines of light,
With their high fields of sunshine, and the hoary
Vast wastes of the illimitable night,
Mirrored beneath in all the marshy meres,
Whose fusing emerald and sapphire render
Again, where beautiful Potomac slides,
The phantom of the city's marbled splendor,
Or in a dusky wash of starry tides!
Oh, fair these gardens we have haunted, too,
Blown full of roses, where the air that rides
Past cedars and magnolias drenched with dew
Enchants the dark it dreams and dallies through!

VI.

And fair, o'er all, that shrine where, once, adoring,
We saw the moonlight sheet the shining walls,
We saw the inner lamplight softly pouring,
Till the whole pile seemed lucent, and its halls
Twin temples of our liberty; the while,
You gazed, — where high the airier lustre shimmered,
A cloud upon the clouds light lay the dome,
A star among the stars the tholus glimmered, —
Like some patrician lady of old Rome.
Alas! how many women died with you!
For, later, when you turned the page at home,
Your face, your grace, your tears, Queen Constance drew,
The serpent of old Nile your likeness grew!

VII.

To-night, within that home, while all are sleeping,
I sit alone, and watch the midnight wear.

Is it the wind that round the house comes
creeping?
Is it your footfall on the polished stair?
Strange visions in the mirrors gleam and go:
Your smiles, your grief, your youth-renewing
rapture
In her whose beauty dazzled half a world,
Here, where so late you lived and loved, I
capture,
Despite the dart that destiny has hurled.
Oh, answer me: where are you, if not here?
Break the appalling silence round you furled;
Say if your great flame fell, or burns it clear
To-night in some sublimer atmosphere!

VIII.

Alas! With you the whole earth somewhat
faded,
Turned from its path of sunshine, where the
way
With shadow of great mysteries was shaded;
Some bloom forsook the skies, some charm
the day;
Some secret lost the song I paused to hear.

I seem to tread on graves since your swift
going
The trembling gates of loss wide open threw;
All things were shaken in your overthrowing,
And age its frosty breath upon me blew.
And still, though life is dear, and dear shall be
Love, and the fresh delights that are not few,
My heart cries to you, wandering far and free,
O great, sweet ghost, do you remember me?

PEACE.

Oh, that the bells in all those silent spires
Would clash their clangor on the sleeping air;
Ring their wild music out with throbbing choirs,
Ring peace in everywhere!

Oh, that the wave of sorrow surging o'er
The red, red land would wash away its stain;
Drown out the angry fire from shore to shore,
And give it peace again!

On last year's blossoming graves, with summer calm,
Loud in his happy tangle hums the bee;
Nature forgets her hurt, and finds her balm;
Alas! and why not we?

Spirit of God that moved upon the face
Of the waters, and bade ancient chaos cease,
Shine, shine again o'er this tumultuous space,
Thou that art Prince of Peace!

THE LONELY GRAVE.

BLOOD-RED the roses blossom in the dell,
The bosky place where once the battle fell;
Tall have the grasses grown since then, and rank
The ferns, fed with the ghastly dew they drank.
Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet these roses of the South;
Sweet these rain-lilies blowing after drouth;
Sweet the wild grape, whose bunches everywhere
Fling spice upon the lonesome summer air;
Sweet the great orange boughs and jasmine flowers
In dawn and dusk through all the visiting hours
That troop across the hidden grave's low swell
Where the palmetto stands, a sentinel!

A lonely grave, — none care for it, none know
His name who all these seasons sleeps below.
Only the heedless hunter pauses there
To sight some wing that quivers in the air,
Nor feels the presence of an ancient pain
That yearns about the unknown spot in vain.
Only the noonday sunshine comes, the rain;
The golden moons above it wax and wane;
The wild deer couch beside it, and the snake
Glitters and slips along beneath the brake;
While from the dagger-tree the bubbling song
Of mocking-birds makes music all night long.

But far on Northern hills a woman grows
The sadder with each gust the south wind blows;
A mother listens, and with eager ears
The step long hushed in every footfall hears;
And friends, flower-laden, in a martial rout
Among the fortunate graves go in and out.
Ah, if to-day one violet fell here,
One bluebell dropped its heaven-holding tear,
One homely door-stone blossom shed its breath,

Less desolate with the despair of death,
For all the song, the splendid glow and gleam,
This lush-leaved covert of the dead would seem!

Yet, on this sole day of the waiting year,
Since love with its dear tribute comes not near,
Its shadow steals through the green under-gloom
To scatter armfuls of pale myrtle bloom, —
A dark shape crooning o'er the lonely grave,
The wildly tuned thank-offering of the slave.
For here, where strange boughs move and strange wings whir,
He rests upon his arms who died for her.
Brighter the tide that wet the soil returns,
And in the blaze of the pomegranate burns;
Loftier the heavens climb from that low grave,
Tenderer the air to which his breath he gave.
Because he died, her children are her own;
Her soul, she cries, to a white soul has grown;

Because he sleeps beneath the alien sod,
Her race in fuller sunlight answers God.
Oh, sweet the bosky dell in sun and shower;
Sweet the low wind that creeps from flower
to flower!
Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet these roses of the
South,
The breath of the rain-lilies' honeyed mouth;
Sweet the bird's song across the lonely grave,
But sweeter still the blessings of the slave!

BETWEEN THE GRAVES.

MAY 30.

WHERE blood once quenched the camp-fire's
brand,
On every sod throughout the land
The silver showers slip softly down;
On every sod some growing stem
Lifts to the light a shining crown.

For underneath her bending blue,
With leaf and sunshine, moon and dew,
Glad nature gilds the graveside gloom,
Nor asks what passions stirred the dust
Through which her pulses spring to bloom.

While from the gardens of the South,
Like blessings blown from some warm mouth,
The wooing wind steals all day long,
Steals lingeringly from grave to grave
With breath of blossom, breath of song.

A common flag, breeze, showers, and flowers,
Are weaving all these sunny hours,
  Where broken hearts and hopes are hid,
And the great mother on each bed
  Lays it, a fragrant coverlid.

You, who with garlands go about,
As the tree-tilting bird pours out
  O'er either mound his singing bliss,
Oh, kind as birds and breezes, leave
  A flower on that grave, and on this!

For, lo, the eternal truce of death
Was called upon the passing breath,
  And all the phantom hates, that shed
Their shadows round us as they stalked,
  Have no remembrance with the dead!

THE GRANADAN GIRL'S SONG.

All day the lime blows in the sun,
All day the silver aspens quiver,
All day along the far blue plain
Winds serpent-like the golden river.
From clustering flower and myrtle bower
Soft sounds arise forever,
From gleaming tower with crescent dower
Our banner floats forever!

Its purple bloom the grape puts on,
Pulping to this compelling summer,
And heavy dews shake through the globes
Scarce stirred by some bright-winged newcomer;
On yon brown hill, where all is still,
Where lightly rides the muleteer,
With jangling bells, whose burden swells
Till shaft and arch rise fine and clear.

As one by one the shadows creep
  Back to their lairs in hilly hollows,
A broader radiance issues forth,
  And on their track in silence follows.
    A fuller air swims everywhere,
      A freer murmur shakes the bough,
    A thousand fires surprise the spires,
      And all the city wakes below!

What morn shall rise, what cursèd morn,
  To find this bright pomp all surrendered,
These palaces an empty shell,
  This vigor listless ruin rendered;
    While every sprite of its delight
      Mocks fickle echoes through the court,
    And in our place a sculptured trace
      Saddens some stranger's careless sport?

Oh, gay with all the stately stir,
  And bending to your silken flowing,
One day, my banner-poles, ye creak
  Naked beneath the high winds blowing!
    One day ye fall across the wall
      And moulder in the moat's green bosom,

While in the cleft the wild tree left
Bursts into spikes of cruel blossom!

Ah, never dawn that day for me!
O Fate, its fierce foreboding banish!
When all our hosts, like pallid ghosts
Blown on by morning, melt and vanish!
Oh, in the fires of their desires
Consume the toil of those invaders!
And let the brand divide the hand
That grasps the hilt of the Crusaders!

Yet idle words in such a scene!
Yon pearly mists on high careering;
The Moorish cavaliers who fleet
With hawk and hound and distant cheering;
The dipping sail puffed to the gale,
The prow that spurns the billow's fawning, —
How can they fade to dimmer shade,
And how this day desert its dawning?

Forget to float, thou pearly rack!
Ye riders, bronze your airy motion!

Still skim the seas, so snowy craft,
Forever sail to meet the ocean!
There bid the tide refuse to slide,
Glassing, below, thy drooping pinion,
Forever cease its wild caprice,
Fallen at the feet of our dominion!

THE BLUE.

Lads of our land, the flower of youth,
Loitering the vext Havana through,
Shot down like dogs, because, forsooth,
The ribbon at their throats is blue!
The Spaniard will not brook the blue!

And not a regent of our power
Hurls its hot lightnings, swift and true!
No navies make the place, this hour,
A blot upon the ocean's blue!
The Spaniard will not brook the blue!

O war-ships, in the tropic seas,
Idling with each impatient crew,
Strike the bright flag that flouts the breeze,
And from its splendor tear the blue!
The Spaniard will not brook the blue!

Ye spirits, in your shining crowds,
That on this sphere God's bidding do,
Call the four winds, and call the clouds,
And out of heaven wash the blue!
The Spaniard will not brook the blue!

OUR NEIGHBOR.

Old neighbor, for how many a year
The same horizon, stretching here,
Has held us in its happy bound
From Rivermouth to Ipswich Sound!
How many a wave-washed day we 've seen
Above that low horizon lean,
And marked within the Merrimack
The self-same sunset reddening back,
Or in the Powow's shining stream,
That silent river of a dream!

Where Craneneck o'er the woody gloom
Lifts her steep mile of apple-bloom;
Where Salisbury Sands, in yellow length,
With the great breaker measures strength;
Where Artichoke in shadow slides,
The lily on her painted tides, —
There 's naught in the enchanted view
That does not seem a part of you;

Your legends hang on every hill,
Your songs have made it dearer still.

Yours is the river-road; and yours
Are all the mighty meadow floors
Where the long Hampton levels lie
Alone between the sea and sky.
Fresher in Follymill shall blow
The Mayflowers, that you loved them so;
Prouder Deer Island's ancient pines
Toss to their measure in your lines;
And purpler gleam old Appledore,
Because your foot has trod her shore.

Still shall the great Cape wade to meet
The storms that fawn about her feet,
The summer evening linger late
In many-rivered Stackyard Gate,
When we, when all your people here,
Have fled. But like the atmosphere,
You still the region shall surround,
The spirit of the sacred ground,
Though you have risen, as mounts the star,
Into horizons vaster far!

MAYFLOWERS.

I FANCY in my buried race
Some Puritan, far-off and dim,
Who left in me no other trace
Than love of what was dear to him.

Through richer veins his blood has flowed,
But every spring its pulse I feel
When, in the ruts of Seabrook road,
By the first Mayflower's sod I kneel.

For scarcely could this wild perfume
Enrapture so my soul and sense,
If, quick with that ethereal bloom,
Thrilled not anew the influence

When all his spirit's icy death —
The first long winter's chill despair —
Was blown on by this tender breath,
And vanished in immortal air.

DAYS OF REST.

STILL Sundays, rising o'er the world,
Have never failed to bring their calm,
While, from their tranquil wings unfurled,
On the tired heart distilling balm.
A purer air bathes all the fields,
A purer gold the generous sky;
The land a hallowed silence yields,
All things in mute, glad worship lie, —
All save where careless innocence
In the great Presence sports and plays,
A wild bird whistles, or the wind
Tosses the light snow from the sprays.

For life renews itself each week,
Each Sunday seems to crown the year;
The fair earth rounds as fresh a cheek
As though just made another sphere.
The shadowy film that sometimes breathes
Between our thought and Heaven disparts,

The quiet hour so brightly wreathes
  Its solemn peace about our hearts.
And Nature, whether sun or shower
  Caprices with her soaring days,
Rests conscious, in some happy sense,
  Of the wide smile that lights her ways.

MAGDALEN.

If any woman of us all,
  If any woman of the street,
Before the Lord should pause and fall,
  And with her long hair wipe his feet;

He, whom with yearning hearts we love,
  And fain would see with human eyes
Around our living pathway move,
  And underneath our daily skies;

The Maker of the heavens and earth,
  The Lord of life, the Lord of death,
In whom the universe had birth
  But breathing of our breath one breath! —

If any woman of the street
  Should kneel, and with the lifted mesh
Of her long tresses wipe his feet,
  And with her kisses kiss their flesh, —

How round that woman would we throng!
How willingly would clasp her hands,
Fresh from that touch divine, and long
To gather up the twice-blest strands!

How eagerly with her would change
Our trivial innocence, nor heed
Her shameful memories and strange,
Could we but also claim that deed!

IN THE CARAVAN.

When we see our life like a desert hard to cross,
Where the great heats are beating beneath a cruel beam,
And only in mirage the plumy palm-trees toss,
Purple shadows tremble, cooling waters gleam;

When the sand-storm threatens, and bleached bones mark the way
And the long levels burn against the burning sky,
And we weary for a shelter, and hate the blinding day, —
Hate the fierce lights, the scorching airs, and long to die;

When we picture only the sudden fall of night
Deep and dark and azure through distances of stars,

Think of dusky winds that whisper up its height
Like winged spirits fanning against their prison-bars;

And, when thus we sigh and languish, a cry resounds, and soon,
Across the sea of sand some foreland rears its head,
Where tamarisk thickets drop their dew in the mid-noon, —
Then life rebubbles in our veins as it might stir the dead!

Oh, surely so, when hard the way before and long behind,
One everlasting refuge always rises close at hand,
Where the living fountains flow, and in whose rest we find
The Shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land!

WITNESSES.

WHENEVER my heart is heavy,
And life seems sad as death,
A subtle and marvelous mockery
Of all who draw their breath,
And I weary of throned injustice,
The rumor of outrage and wrong,
And I doubt if God rules above us,
And I cry, O Lord, how long,
How long shall sorrow and evil
Their forces around them draw!
Is there no power in thy right hand,
Is there no life in thy law?

Then at last the blazing brightness
Of day forsakes its height,
Slips like a splendid curtain
From the awful and infinite night;
And out of the depths of distance,
The gulfs of purple space,

The stars steal, slow and silent,
  Each in the ancient place, —
Each in armor shining,
  The hosts of heaven arrayed,
And wheeling through the midnight
  As they did when the world was made.

And I lean out among the shadows
  Cast by that far white gleam,
And I tremble at the murmur
  Of one mote in the mighty beam,
As the everlasting squadrons
  Their fated influence shed,
While the vast meridians sparkle
  With the glory of their tread.
That constellated glory
  The primal morning saw,
And I know God moves to his purpose,
  And still there is life in his law!

ALIVE.

When the wild wake-robin starts in the wood
At the joy of the earth who escapes her bars,
And the birches flutter in breezy mood,
And the quick brooks run and sing in the sun
To some strain of the song of the morning-stars;

When the gay rhodoras throng the swamp,
Like a settling cloud of wingèd things
All a-quiver in purple pomp,
And their green and gold the ferns unfold
To the far-heard murmur of hastening springs;

When trilliums nod, and the columbines
Spread like flames through the forest gloom;

When in open field the white-weed shines,
And the birds and bees in the apple-trees
Dart through skies of blue and bloom;

When the whole bright orb is flashing along,
With her cloudy gossamers round her curled,
A thing of blossom and leaf and song, —
Still, I cry, is He far as the farthest star,
Or living and pulsing across his world?

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT.

In the beginning, when the vast
  Lay in a void of turbid night,
A mighty music filled the deeps, —
  Let there be light: and there was light.

When night and shadow ruled again,
  And only dim hill-altars shone
Or swart Astarte's flamed and fell,
  Entreating light, where light was none,

Once more that mighty mandate cleft
  The day from dark, and night from morn,
While all the hungering deeps replied, —
  Let there be light: and Christ was born!

CANDLEMAS.

LIKE some immortal heathen thing,
All fresh with bloom, with odor sweet,
With brook and bird and breeze in tune,
The beautiful bright earth of June
Moves to the fullness of her noon,
While serving sunbeams round her fling
The purple violets as they fleet.

But when the winter's feathery rime
Plumes every leaf and every spray,
And the deep skies about her close,
With morning's saffron, evening's rose,
Sparkling along her stainless snows,
So some great spirit, done with time,
Takes into space its white-winged way.

BLIND.

He knows the summer comes, for now
The pleasant south wind seeks his brow;
He hears the twitter and the song
Of building birds the whole day long.
For him the violet breathes and blows;
The pansy's perfume comes and goes;
And hint of honeysuckles' bloom
For him forever in the gloom.

But not for him the dewy morn
Hangs heaven upon the idle thorn;
But not for him the splendid day
Blazons the azure on its way;
And not for him the awful night
Wings upward her eternal flight.

But to be blind, and be like him,
When far away these shadows swim,
While God's bright lilies to and fro
Shake softly all their gold and snow,

And first he satisfies his sight
At the great fountain of the light,
And sees in glory and alone
The emerald rainbow round the throne!

PALMISTRY.

A LITTLE hand, a fair soft hand,
  Dimpled and sweet to kiss :
No sculptor ever carved from stone
  A lovelier hand than this.

A hand as idle and as white
  As lilies on their stems ;
Dazzling with rosy finger-tips,
  Dazzling with crusted gems.

Another hand, — a tired old hand,
  Written with many lines ;
A faithful, weary hand, whereon
  The pearl of great price shines !

For folded, as the wingéd fly
  Sleeps in the chrysalis,
Within this little palm I see
  That lovelier hand than this !

LULLABY.

I.

Rest, little one, without a fear,
  Without a fear; for far away
The great sea breaks upon the shore
  From day to dark, from dark to day;
And all the thunders of its roar,
Through silence filtered o'er and o'er,
In murmurous music hush thine ear!
In murmurous music hush thine ear!

II.

Droop, like the petals of a rose,
  A drooping rose, dear eyelids, droop
Above the honeydew of dreams;
  While happy slumbers round thee stoop
And weave their wings across the gleams
Where life's too vivid tumult streams.
Close, softly close, sweet eyelids, close!
Close, softly close, sweet eyelids, close!

FIRST AND LAST.

JUST come from heaven, how bright and fair
The soft locks of the baby's hair,
As if the unshut gates still shed
The shining halo round his head!

Just entering heaven, what sacred snows
Upon the old man's brow repose!
For there the opening gates have strewn
The glory from the great white throne.

SECOND-SIGHT.

UNDER the apple bough she sits,
The sunshine in her flying hair;
Dimpling and laughing through the fall
Of blushing flakes about her there.

And as I gaze I picture me,
Beside this darling of our souls,
Two innocents with softer locks,
Half ringlets and half aureoles.

They frolic with her in the grass;
They listen to the bird, the bee;
They catch the petals as they float;
They babble music in their glee.

They teach the little earthling how
The cherubs play in hallowed courts,
With some great gracious angel near,
And smiling on them at their sports.

Oh, do I really look upon
  Those lost delights of vanished years,
Or do I only dream them there,
  Because I see her through my tears?

UNDER THE BREATH.

Since tears will never bring thee back,
Why should I weep?
I would not any moan of mine
Should break thy sleep.

Sleep on, my baby! By thy side
I will not stir
More than the bird that broods and dreams
Deep in the fir, —

The bird that dreams of fluttering joy
Full soon her own,
Nor sees the shadow at her feet
Whose joy has flown!

UNDER THE SNOW-DRIFTS.

UNDER the snow-drifts the blossoms are sleeping,
Dreaming their dreams of sunshine and June;
Down in the hush of their quiet they 're keeping
Trills from the throstle's wild summer-sung tune.

Under the snow-drifts what blossoms are sleeping,
Never to waken with sunshine or June!
Do they dream dreams of the eyes that are weeping,
Under the snow-drifts, by midnight and noon?

SONG.

When the great breezes call
From east to west,
And through the turfy wall
Sing him to rest;
While lightly snow-flakes fall
Upon his breast,
Till the low bed be hid
By their soft coverlid,
So fair and frore, —
Could love of mine do more?

When flower and leaf and light
The green sod bless;
When, out of heaven's height,
The sunbeams press
Around him the delight
Of their caress,
And from the hemlock hear,
Where little nests lie near,
The bird-songs pour, —
Could love of mine do more?

OAK HILL.

THERE are roses of passionate perfume
In the gardens under the hill,
Red-lipped and rich with the honey
That the brown bee sips at will.

Lightly their breath is blowing
Wherever the west wind flies,
A part of the breathing rapture
Of laughter and kisses and sighs.

But here, where the silence is perfect
As in undiscovered lands,
The lilies are crowding like sainted souls,
With their gold harps in their hands.

And I think if the Lord, at cool of day,
Should again with his servants tread,
It is here that his feet would linger,—
In this Garden of the Dead!

LOSS AND GAIN.

When a soul that shines both strong and
sweet
From fearless eyes, and makes the world com-
plete,
Vanishes, like foam upon the shore,
Is the earth more desert than before?

Nay! that soul on death its beauty lays,
Casts a splendor down the sunless ways;
Nay! the sky burns bluer, and the night
Soars to follow it a hallowed height!

AN OLD SONG.

An old song, an old song! But the new are
not so sweet, —
Sweet though they be with honeyed words,
and sweet with fancies fair,
With thrills of tune in silver troop of an-
swering echoes fleet,
With tender longings slumberous upon en-
chanted air.

An old song! But across its verse what view-
less voices sing!
Through all its simple burden what human
pulses stir!
More intimate with grief and joy than any
precious thing
That the years have wrapped away in frank-
incense and myrrh!

Lovers have sung it, summer nights, when
earth itself seemed heaven;

Sailors far off on lonely seas have given it
to the gale;
Mothers have hushed its measure on the quiet
edge of even,
While soft as falling rose-leaves dear eye-
lids dropped their veil.

Long since the sailor made his grave between
two rolling waves,
The lovers and their love are naught,
mother and child are dust;
But to-night some maiden lilts it, to-night its
sounding staves
Are blowing from the stroller's lips on this
balmy blossom-gust.

A part of life, its music flows as the blood
flows in the vein;
Laughter ripples through it, tears make its
charm complete;
For the heart of all the ages beats still
through this old strain, —
An old song, an old song, but the new are
not so sweet!

THE BIRTHDAY.

M. L. B.

Into this world, with April, you
Were ushered by the birds, the dew
On opening violets, and the blue
Of skies just washed from weary stain
With shower on shower of happy rain;
By earthy scent of furrows new,
By sudden rainbows on the wing,
And each dear thing of early spring.

Wild hyacinths are in the grass,
That grow more purple as you pass;
And pale above the answering glass
They find in many a shadowy brook
The daffodils bend down and look,
See the chance cloud, a snowy mass,
And see the restless bluebird fly
Deep in the high and painted sky.

Oh, gay the day that April brings,
When all about the wide air rings
With melody of whistling wings,
With rustling waters, and the sigh
Of odorous branches far and nigh,
Where the bee murmurs as he clings,
While up and down the glad winds strew
The rosy snow of apple blow!

Ah, if on some delicious day,
Dropped out of heaven and into May,
You first had wandered down this way,
When mellow sunbeams wove their snare
Through azure vapors everywhere,
And all the land in languor lay,
It had not seemed a day so meet,
So shy and fleet, so fresh and sweet!

MARION.

Two hundred years ago, they say,
On pleasant Topsfield's wind-swept hill,
Where now your honeyed gardens glow,
Nightly the witches worked their will.

Ah, what an hour! The red moon tipped
Her horns athwart the tide, and sent
Vague gleams that o'er the forest glades
Like flaming phantoms came and went.

And madly tossed the boughs, to catch
The stars' white fires in eager play;
And all the wizard rout streamed up,
Flared in the beam, and streamed away.

Then folk, belated in the wood,
Shivered to see, as past they whirled,
The hurtling glance of baleful eyes,
The yellow tress that wild winds curled.

For these could blight the world in flower,
  Could shake strange sorrows out of fate;
Could burn with frost, or burn with fire,
  And curdle heart's love into hate.

They were the witches of Witch Hill,
  Famed far and near, a haunting crew;
And yet, I think, in all the troop
  Was not so great a witch as you!

You, who came hither, from the shore
  Where a queen's palace-gardens still
Blow blossom-breath far out to sea,
  To your own gardens on the hill;

You, who, with shadowy eyes, wherein
  The evening star to splendor starts,
With tones that ripple like the brooks,
  Found the swift way to all our hearts;

You, who still wear a child's bright brow,
  But for all things of sore and sad
Out of an aching pity pour
  Largess of love to make them glad;

You, who shall help the world to flower,
Strange sorrows heal with stranger skill,
And bring new magic round you here,
My little witch of old Witch Hill!

THE NUN AND HARP.

WHAT memory fired her pallid face,
  What passion stirrèd her blood,
What tide of sorrow and desire
  Poured its forgotten flood
Upon a heart that ceased to beat,
Long since, with thought that life was sweet
When nights were rich with vernal dusk,
  And the rose burst its bud?

Had not the western glory then
  Stolen through the latticed room,
Her funeral raiment would have shed
  A more heart-breaking gloom;
Had not a dimpled convent-maid
Hung in the door-way, half afraid,
And left the melancholy place
  Bright with her blush and bloom!

Beside the gilded harp she stood,
  And through the singing strings

Wound those wan hands of folded prayer
In murmurous preludings.
Then, like a voice, the harp rang high
Its melody, as climb the sky,
Melting against the melting blue,
Some bird's vibrating wings.

Ah why, of all the songs that grow
Forever tenderer,
Chose she that passionate refrain
Where lovers 'mid the stir
Of wassailers that round them pass
Hide their sweet secret? Now, alas,
In her nun's habit, coifed and veiled,
What meant that song to her!

Slowly the western ray forsook
The statue in its shrine;
A sense of tears thrilled all the air
Along that purpling line.
Earth seemed a place of graves that rang
To hollow footsteps, while she sang,
"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine!"

TWO.

Just two lilies on a stem, —
  Easily you had not told
Which the sweeter was of them:
  This, wide heart of virgin gold;
  That, half shut, fold over fold.

Just two maidens, such as those
  Once the sons of God found fair:
This, a blush that comes and goes,
  Caught upon the dimples' snare;
  That, half hid in dropping hair.

Flesh delicious as a peach;
  Voice like bird-song on the wing;
Youth's soft glamour over each:
  But the soul, — ah, there 's the sting!
  Who of that said anything?

GODSPEED.

THE great ship spreads her wings, her plumes are flying;
Music sweeps down the deck, and chiming laughter;
She climbs the green crest of the shining surges,
The shadow of the chasing surge climbs after.

Ah, never overtake her, mighty shadow!
Spirits of fire and air, attend upon her;
In cloud by day and fire by night possess her;
Sacred her charge, and sacred be her honor!

Far in the mid-waste of the weltering waters,
Furrowed with dark and day and dark returning,

Fly, fly, good ship, easting with every dawning,
To hail your beacon in the billows burning!

And though you toss where never breath of blossom
Blows, nor sweeps round the mast the swift sea swallow,
Yet with you still, all storm, all space, defying,
On her untiring wing my love shall follow!

LONGING.

O BRIGHT wings, flashing round me in your flight
Within the hollow heaven's shining height,
A sparkling sapphire and a ruby's blaze,
The living light of these long Southern days;
Redbirds, that on the dark sprays cling and swing
As if pomegranate flowers themselves took wing;
Soft turtle-doves, that murmur in the shade
The fig-tree on the summer sward has laid;
O mocking-birds, that on the topmost bough
Wake all the world with music, — gladly now
To all your song would I be deaf, and blind
To all your beauty, could I only mind
Among my orchard's cloud of apple blooms,
Deep in the heart of all their dewy glooms,
The robin's first soft flute-note when the light
Begins to stir in the dark nest of night!

A SIGH.

It was nothing but a rose I gave her, —
Nothing but a rose
Any wind might rob of half its savor,
Any wind that blows.

When she took it from my trembling fingers
With a hand as chill, —
Ah, the flying touch upon them lingers,
Stays, and thrills them still!

Withered, faded, pressed between the pages,
Crumpled fold on fold, —
Once it lay upon her breast, and ages
Can not make it old!

A WRECK.

They walked along the murmuring shore:
  High was the tide, and near and wide
  In flashing hints of iris tints
Each wave its splendid foam-wreath bore.

Faint in the purple east, and far,
  One bending sail swelled on the gale;
  The tide was full, but white as wool
The breakers combed beyond the bar.

They saw no breakers' angry bale
  Lift into sight its deathly light;
  They only saw the laughing flaw,
And all their hope was on the sail.

They walked again beside the shore:
  The tide was down, the sands were brown,
  And fleck on fleck of one great wreck
Strewed all its barren beauty o'er.

IN SUMMER NIGHTS.

I. MUSIC IN THE NIGHT.

WHEN stars pursue their solemn flight,
Oft in the middle of the night,
A strain of music visits me,
Hushed in a moment silverly, —
Such rich and rapturous strains as make
The very soul of silence ache
With longing for the melody.

Or lovers in the distant dusk
Of summer gardens, sweet as musk,
Pouring the blissful burden out,
The breaking joy, the dying doubt;
Or revelers, all flown with wine,
And in a madness half divine,
Beating the broken tune about.

Or else the rude and rolling notes
That leave some strolling sailors' throats,

Hoarse with the salt sprays, it may be,
Of many a mile of rushing sea;
Or some high-minded dreamer strays
Late through the solitary ways,
Nor heeds the listening night, nor me.

Or how or whence those tones be heard,
Hearing, the slumbering soul is stirred,
As when a swiftly passing light
Startles the shadows into flight;
While one remembrance suddenly
Thrills through the melting melody, —
A strain of music in the night.

Out of the darkness bursts the song,
Into the darkness moves along:
Only a chord of memory jars,
Only an old wound burns its scars,
As the wild sweetness of the strain
Smites the heart with passionate pain,
And vanishes among the stars.

II. BOAT SONG.

Oh, fair the flight, at dead of night,
When, up the immeasurable height,
The thin cloud wanders with the breeze
That shakes the lustre from the star,
That stoops and crisps the darkling seas,
And drives the daring keel afar
Where loneliness and silence are!
To cleave the crested wave, and mark
Drowned in its depth the shattered spark;
On airy swells to soar, and rise
Where nothing but the foam bell flies;
O'er freest tracts of wild delight,
Oh, fair the flight, at dead of night!

III. INTERMEZZO.

Sheer below us, as we stand to-night
Leaning on the balustrade, the river
Flows in such still darkness that the stars,
Painted on its bosom, scarcely quiver.

Far above us, through the violet depths,
All those silent stars sweep in their places;

What a solemn, shining flight they soar,
From court to court of the eternal spaces!

Oh, how beautiful you are, my love!
How your heart bounds with its tender yearning!
How upon your lips, your cheeks, your eyes,
The fragrant flame of your full life is burning!

Yet alas, alas, the flame shall fall,
Love and lover shall be dust and ashes,
While those stars move mercilessly on,
And the tide still paints their awful flashes!

IV. WINDS FROM SEA.

Softly the winds come singing in from sea,
Singing to nothing but the moon and me,—
The moon, half risen, lingering and late;
From lands long leagues away come singing free,
From lands where summer holds her shining state.

Lately on snowy orange stems they slept,
Among a palm-tree's billowy branches crept,
And rustled in a red pomegranate bough;
Then, rich with heavy spices, shoreward swept,
And brought their balms to fan my eager brow.

O midnight winds, that through such splendor fly,—
The hollow of a sapphire in the sky,
The paved work of a sapphire on the sea,—
How soon your warm deliciousness might die
Could you but stay and swell one sail for me!

V. NIGHT IN TEXAS.

The lonely interspace of night!
The lampless dome awaits the rain;
No footfall stirs the unruffled calm
Through San Antonio's weird domain.
The summer city, breathing balm,
Muffled in musky branch and bloom,
Sleeps hushed within the haunted gloom.

The jasmines, in their deep dream life,
Across the open window-place
Roll their luxurious air, and slow,
Stealing along from space to space,
Wafts of an arch enchantment blow
Where the great white magnolias lift
Their cups and let the sweetness drift.

Lonely, and mute, and masked, and sweet,
When, hear! A sigh, a low reply,
Another, and another still,
A flute-note, then a rapturous cry,
And all abroad in answering trill,
As if boughs swung in breezy glee,
The mocking-birds are whistling free.

Ah, what an ecstasy of tune
Breaks the dead shadow of the night!
Gush after gush its warble wells,
Song over song it scales the height,
Broad-breasted on the silvery swells;
Then ceases in a sudden pride,
With the full echo far and wide.

Hark! 't is the blackbird's pipe begins;
Nay, 't is the plover's airy note:
Ah, listen! 't is an ancient strain
Snatched from a wandering harper's throat;
And now the jocund burst again.
Oh, blest the day's intensest light,
Crowned by this revelry of night!

VI. LOVERS.

Midnight and June!
The yellow phantom of a moon
Far out at sea,
Dark branches arching overhead,
The river flowing in the gloom,
And heavy scents of leaf and bloom,
Making it just a joy to be!

And in the dew,
Beneath the branches bending too,
Two faces bent, —
Bent in a swift and daring dream,
An ecstasy of trembling bliss,
And sealed together in a kiss, —
And the night waiting passion-spent.

For this the day
Swooned from its fiery skies away;
For this the night
Built up its stars and silences;
For this the royal summer came,
Wrapped in her robes of balmy flame, —
This moment pausing on its flight!

Midnight and June!
A dreaming bird repeats his tune, —
The sea replies;
Perfume and hush and shadow still,
But nothing as it was before,
Subtly and strangely all made o'er
With love's unsealing of the eyes!

VII. UNDER THE WINDOW.

The hours that bear thy beauty prize
  Star after star sinks numbering;
The laden wind at thy lattice sighs
  To find thee slumbering, slumbering!

Ah, wantonly why waste these hours
That love would fain be borrowing?
Soon youth and joy must fall like flowers,
And leave thee sorrowing, sorrowing!

Ye fleeting hours, ye sacred skies,
Free airs around her hovering,
Oh, open me the envied eyes
Your spells are covering, covering!

Or, only, while the dew's soft showers
Shake slowly into glistening,
Let her, O magic midnight hours,
In dreams be listening, listening!

VIII. IN THE GARDEN.

Thy beauty, like a star,
Whose life is light,
Shines on me from afar
And on the night.

Each midnight blossom bends
With sweetest weight,

And to thy casement sends
Its fragrant freight.

Each air that faintly curls
About thy nest,
Its daring pinion furls
Within thy breast.

The night is spread for thee,
Far fields and wide;
And the dark earth's mystery
Is magnified.

For thee the garden waits,
The hours delay;
The fountains toss their jets
Of shimmering spray.

Then, leave thy dim delight
In dreams above;
Come forth, and crown the night,
With her I love!

IX. BALLAD.

In the summer even
  While yet the dew was hoar,
I went plucking purple pansies,
  Till my love should come to shore.
The fishing lights their dances
  Were keeping out at sea,
And come, I sung, my true love!
  Come hasten home to me!

But the sea, it fell a-moaning,
  And the white gulls rocked thereon;
And the young moon dropped from heaven,
  And the lights hid one by one.
All silently their glances
  Slipped down the cruel sea,
And wait! cried the night and wind and storm, —
  Wait, till I come to thee!

X. FANTASIA.

We 're all alone, we 're all alone !
The moon and stars are dead and gone ;
The night 's at deep, the wind asleep,
And thou and I are all alone !

What care have we though life there be ?
Tumult and life are not for me !
Silence and sleep about us creep ;
Tumult and life are not for thee !

How late it is since such as this
Had topped the height of breathing bliss !
And now we keep an iron sleep, —
In that grave thou, and I in this !

XI. SONG.

Through lonely summers, where the roses blow
Unsought, and shed their tangled sweets,
I sit and hark ; or in the starry dark,
Or when the night-rain on the hill-side beats.

Alone! But when the eternal summers flow
And refluent drown in song all moan,
Thy soul shall waste for its delight, and haste,
Searching, — and I shall be no more alone!

XII. LISTENING.

Her white hand flashes on the strings,
Sweeping a swift and silver chord,
And wild and strong the great harp rings
Its throng of throbbing tones abroad;
Music and moonlight make a bloom
Throughout the rich and sombre room.

Oh, sweet the long and shivering swells,
And sweeter still the lingering flow,
Delicious as remembered bells
Dying in distance long ago,
When evening winds from heaven were blown,
And the heart yearned for things unknown!

Across the leafy window-place
Peace seals the stainless sapphire deep;

One sentry star on outer space
His quenchless lamp lifts, half asleep;
Peace broods where falling waters flow,
Peace where the heavy roses blow.

And on the windless atmosphere
Wait all the fragrances of June;
The summer night is hushed to hear
The passion of the ancient tune!
Then why these sudden tears that start,
And why this pierced and aching heart?

Ah, listen! We and all our pain
Are mortal, and divine the song!
Idly our topmost height we gain:
It spurns that height, and far along
Seeks in the heavens its splendid mark,
And we fall backward on the dark!

XIII. NOCTURNE.

In the soft, starless summer dark
No murmur swims along the air;
Wrapped in her dim and dusky veil,
Earth seems to slumber everywhere.

All the still dews in hiding lie,
  With unrobbed richness droops the rose;
Nor up nor down the garden walks
  A slight or stealthy zephyr blows.

Midnight and hush, profoundest peace;
  The falling leaf forgets to float;
When with one deep and mighty throb
  Along the headland strikes the rote!—

Strikes with the awful undertone
  Of some great storm's tremendous blast,
That far through white mid-seas plows on
  To scream around a broken mast!

But here the swell shall heave to shore
  A muffled music, till it seem
The trouble of the sea become
  Only the burden of a dream!

XIV. OVER AGAIN.

When the poplars patter,
  You can hear her talk;

When the wild wind rises,
And mighty shadows stalk,—
The lovely ghostly lady
That haunts the garden walk.

The chains that bind the poplars
Swing and clank and twist;
When the moon comes breaking
Through that bank of mist,
You will see the filmy fetter
That chains the filmy wrist.

When that sudden moonshine,
Weird and white, shall burst,
The shrouding gloom will kindle
With splendor interspersed.
Ah, how fair the face is!—
How fair and how accurst!

What eternal longing,
What pitiful disdain,
In the great eyes' glory
Flashing back again
Those swords of the archangels
Crossed in eternal pain!

Around her all the roses
  Shake all their velvet leaves;
The summer night's vast sweetness
  Bends down to her, and cleaves,
To hide with veils of darkness
  The darker thing she grieves.

What is it such wan passion
  Forever whispereth?
Why echoes all our laughter
  Such sobbing underbreath?
Why trails across our pleasure
  That darker thing than death?

Come in, come in: the moon sets,
  And horror arms his hosts;
Ah, what a storm comes heaving
  Far up these lonely coasts!
Oh, hasten, love and lover,
  Lest ye, too, turn to ghosts!

SHELTERED.

OPEN the door! Did you hear it?
Muffled in mist and gloom,
Out of this rough northeaster
It fell like a stroke of doom.
Some gunner is lost on the meadow—
Hark! No! 'T was a swivel's boom!

Do you know what the boom of a swivel
Means on a night like this?
Can you see the bare masts tottering
Over a black abyss?
There lurching decks, and here firesides
Robbed of their rosy bliss?

Oh, I know of two old hands wringing
Where every ember is gray!
'T is an old shadow swings that lantern
Down by the storm-blown bay,
To a fair and faithless darling
Signaling home that way.

For out of one house the gladness
Went in a long eclipse,
When she fled to-day with her lover, —
Fled to the shore and its ships;
Never a whisper of parting,
Never a kiss on the lips.

And the chill rain beats about her, —
Their child with the golden locks, —
While out in the thick wild weather,
Girt by the sands and the rocks,
The little schooner trembles
To the tread of the equinox.

Has it come again since we listened?
Ah! — Well, then, make the door fast.
What a great gust shakes the rafter!
How black and bitter the blast!
Stir the fire. In the sands to-morrow
Will be plenty of drift-wood cast.

THE OLD POET AND HIS WIFE.

AROUND her fell the evening glow,
Her old hands lying on her knee,
As if the years had bent her low.
"When I was young and fair," sighed she,
"Oh, long, so very long, ago" —
"Nay, nay, my love, you still are so;
You always will be fair to me, —
You always will be fair!" said he.

"But I was fairer when a bride;
Ah, mock not these gray hairs that know —
So swift, so swift the seasons slide,"
She murmured, — "seventy winters' snow."
"Nay, there," said he, "the lights still hide
In gilded shadows where divide
The locks in hyacinthine flow,
While in this mask of age you go."

"Alas! and were it so, unseen
Even the mask lies soon. How soon,

How soon," she sighed, "my grave is green!
The thrush without me trills his tune,
Without me twilight is serene;
All things forget that I have been,
And still on balanced wings the moon
Pursues the purple darks of June!"

"Nay, summer comes," he said, "and goes
By you, as in some desert spot
Sands fan the porphyry Pharaohs,
Unnoting, and divinely hot.
Let the bird build, and let the rose
Flower as the star flowers at the close
Of day, — you will not be forgot,
For you remain when these are not.

"They pass, like chaff the loose winds thresh;
But you are sealed within my verse,
With all your blushes ever fresh
As those bright figures men unhearse,
The bloom upon the fruity flesh,
The ribbon in the ringlet's mesh,
Through sunny centuries nothing worse
For gray Pompeii's ashen curse!

"If Phidias had carved you, dear,
In ivory, enriched with gold,
Some blithe barbarian, with his spear,
Climbing the rampart, bare and bold,
Had thrust you downward with a jeer;
Gaunt roots had wreathed for many a year
Your beauty, and some boor had rolled
A broken antique from the mould.

"Or if on Titian's canvas you
Had mixed your colors with the sun,
And from the gates of morning drew
The splendors that your shape put on,
Some envious ray, some blistering dew,
One day would blot the wondrous view,
When all the spells that Venice spun
O'er her wan waters were undone!

"But in the compass of a song,
Sweetheart, you breathe diviner air,
While music beats its pulse along
The happy lines that hold you there.
Still when old Homer clear and strong
Lifts up his voice, what echoes throng

From fierce kings' voices, sounding where
Great Helen lives forever fair!

"And so, far down the years that yearn
For light and blossom, hid in doom,
Some eve when skyey fires burn
To ashes, one in some dim room
The strain of an old book shall learn,
And thumb a yellowing leaf, and turn
To see you stand there and illume
With sudden shining all the gloom:

"Just as on that dear day I first
Drew out, with tender artifice,
The length of the thick curls that pursed
Their clinging, clasping shapes to miss
None of the sunshine, all athirst,
Like globes of Shiraz grapes that burst
Gold from the shade. And one bold kiss
Rapt me, — like this, old wife, and this!

"Ay, though a thousand years be fled,
The sight denied me he shall have:
The quick throbs kindling rosy red
The dimpled damask that they gave,

The darkling glow the soft eyes shed,
The trembling smile, — Though I be dead,
Mine, mine, not his, the power to save, —
A dead old man within my grave!

"Yet should you cease from off the face
Of the sweet earth, and I be blest
With no man's memory for the space
Of a song's singing, that is best.
Laid side by side in some green place
Asleep, — Fate grants a further grace
To none. And sweeter, for the rest,
The earth that holds you in her breast!"

LOVE IN IDLENESS.

I.

When first she met him she was half forlorn,
Weary of aimless life and empty days,
Regretting that she ever had been born,
And wondering whither led her idle ways.

When first she met him, walking in the wood,
She saw the morning shining in his eyes,
Suddenly earth seemed sweet and life seemed good
With deeds worth doing under lofty skies.

Treading together there the forest floors,
Around her homesick heart stole flattered ease,
As when warm winds blow from ambrosial shores
To one long sailing on the lonesome seas.

ONLY A LEAF.

II.

WHERE the late leaves lit all the place,
He left her, with her ashen face;
"We shall not meet!" he lightly cried;
"Good-by, sweetheart, the world is wide."

Though bright the sunshine on that day
Through the bare boughs around her lay,
She thought in blackest shadow stood
The melancholy autumn wood.

She bent, and lifted from the sod
A leaf whereon his foot had trod, —
An idle leaf, but dead and sere,
It held the heart's blood of the year!

A LOVER'S GARDEN.

I THINK the white azaleas, dear,
Shaped out of air to match thyself,
Yet doubt if thou wilt find one here
Among this fragrant flowery pelf;
For they must hide when thou art near, —
As pale as moonlight and as clear.

But any rose that here may blow
Is not one half so fair as thou,
Though petaled white with flakes of snow —
Yet bind no spray about thy brow;
Let the voluptuous roses go,
For roses have a thorn, we know.

But bend, and pass not lightly by,
Where faintest odors hover low;
Here filmy violets ensky
Meanings that should not fail thee so,
Since in their heaven-deepened dye
Pure dreams of perfect passion lie.

And here, like spirits of the blest,
The golden censer in the hand,
To worship and to praise addressed,
Rank after rank the lilies stand;
Long for a place upon thy breast,
Ask is thy smile or sunshine best!

And flout not the famed fleur-de-lis,
That lightly nods that purple plume;
Flower of romantic chivalry,
All France bends to thee in its bloom!
A royal banner's blazonry, —
Thy sceptre would it rather be!

Where float the moths, the bluebirds sip,
Where breath is rapture to the core,
Where honeysuckles climb and slip,
Linger, and say, Had Eden more?
Tiptoe, and let the glad things drip
Their golden honey on thy lip!

But o'er those beds of blasting blight,
Blue hoods of poison and the tomb, —
That blood-red blossom, a delight
To look at, but whose touch is doom, —

Ah, let thy foot make facile flight
Through foxglove and through aconite!

Yet breathe thee where the winds outroll
  From heliotropes an atmosphere
Of fullest joy and vaguest dole,
  That makes each moment deep and dear,
While dim regrets shall fill thy soul,
And longings for some unknown goal.

So shall these buds forever bloom
  Around thee in my memory's freak;
The strawberry-tree refuse thee room,
  The sweet-brier spray brush by thy cheek,
And thou be fresh 'mid their perfume,
And white 'mid their ensanguined gloom.

Then flit down yonder hawthorn coast,
  The ancient lilac alleys thread,
And turn the labyrinth, and be lost;
  That one day, when all hope is dead,
And when the place is dreary most,
Haunt it, I may, with thy sweet ghost!

AT AN OLD GRAVE.

RUTH, daughter of Crisp and Mary Lee,
Lies here in the hope to rise again:
She was born in seventeen forty-eight,
And died in eighteen hundred and one.
The gift of grace to her was free,
She carried her light in the path of men,
And went from the twilight of this estate
Whither God himself is the light and sun.

Thus on the stone was the legend spelled,
When the yellow lichens were scraped away,
Though myriad touches of storm and shower
Had smoothed the wrinkled lettering out,
And the scutcheon the carven cherubs held
Had slowly faded day after day;
While, fresh as they bloomed in their earliest hour,
The wantoning vines crept all about.

And soon deciphered, it stood sole sign
For fifty-three long-forgotten years,
Lonely and childless and sad, perhaps,
Of outward grace and comfort shorn.
And the day with its wide, indifferent shine
It has learned to know, and the night's chill tears;
And round it the train's wild echo flaps
With screaming speed for the eager morn.

Beneath the seasons' heavy hand
The sunken slate leaned down the grave,
While Mays to Aprils have swiftly wheeled,
And slow Arcturus has reddened the snow;
And it sucked the gloom from the sky and land
To that spot where the scanty grasses wave,
Into the heart of its sombre shield,
Till the earth spread laughing and bright below.

For over the slope and far away,
Bathed in the beautiful light of day,
Dimpled with shadows of floating cloud,
And blue in the distant summer still,

The level fields of the champaign lay,
Golden and brown from new-mown hay;
And behind some lofty and lucid shroud
The slant sun rained on a lifted hill.

So when I saw it first, and so,
Had the burial mount refined to glass,
And Ruth forsaken her sleep to look,
She had seen the country lapped in June,
While the loud bee hummed in the clover blow,
And, far from the idle feet that pass,
Like the rustle of any limpid brook,
The throstle fluted his broken tune.

Did the skies let down upon Ruth's birth-night
Larger and lower their throbbing stars;
The river, brimming his banks, flow clear,
And low winds ripple a silken stir?
Did a meteor thrust its veils of light,
And kingly essences burst their bars,
All for the love of the new life here,
And the possibilities born with her?

And hour by hour did the skies grow pale,
The river go by to swell the tide,
And the spirits that wait on awful chance
Lift their plumes for a loftier flight?
Did the great heart falter, the great fate fail,
And the moment that had been glorified
Slip into the slow and idle dance
Of the hours that bring about the light?

Or a sad spark struck to flickering fire
Was that life, held close from the gladsome wind,
And set in all too narrow a niche,
Where rarely breath from the full south came,
Till the mounting spirit, fluttering higher,
Drew the fluent air expressed and thinned,
And wasting the odorous oils and rich,
It turned and fed on its sacred flame?

Ah, what matter? Her life she led
Seventy years and more ago;
Over her slumber the dew distils,
The wild bird warbles, the wild rose blooms,

As o'er any queen who lies crowned and dead!
It may be the innocent natures know
That as well God's purpose such life fulfils
As the lives that lead into lofty tombs.

For haply the simple life of Ruth,
Unthrilled by a lover's tender touch,
Unfilled by a mother's sweet content,
Fed with no honeyed joys at all,
Reached to the heart of things, in truth,
And moulded divine results as much
As the life to which an empire bent,
While it held the same brown dust in thrall!

The low cloud blushed and burned to see
The sun that over her hovered at last;
Soon would the dews shine all about,
And the great procession of stars would climb, —
As much for her still, I said, as for me, —
While I stayed till the sweet-breathed cattle passed.
Nor yet has her murmur quite died out
That whispers along my lingering rhyme!

LEFT ASHORE.

Softly it stole up out of the sea,
The day that brought my dole to me;
Slowly into the star-sown gray,
Dim and dappled, it soared away.
Who would have dreamed such tender light
Was brimming over with bale and blight?
Who would have dreamed that fitful breeze
Fanned from the tumult of tossing seas?
Oh, softly and slowly stole up from the sea
The day that brought my dole to me!

Glad was I at the open door,
While my footfall lingered along the floor,
For three bright heads at that dawn of day
Close on the self-same pillow lay;
Three dear mouths I bent and kissed,
As the gold and rose and amethyst
Of the eastern sky was round us shed;
And three little happy faces sped

To the dancing boat, — and he went too, —
And lightly the wind that morning blew.

Many a time had one and all
Gone out before to the deep-sea haul;
Many a time come rowing back
Against the tide of the Merrimack,
With shining freight, and a reddening sail
Flapping loose in the idle gale;
While over them faded the evening glow,
With stars above and with stars below,
Trolling and laughing, a welcome din,
To me, and the warm shore making in.

Then why that day, as I watched the boat,
Did I remember the midnight rote
That rolled a signal across my sleep
Of the storm that cried from deep to deep,
Plunging along in its eager haste
Across the desert and desolate waste,
Far off through the heart of the gray mid seas,
To rob me forever of all my ease?
Oh, I know not: I only know
That sound was the warning of my woe.

For lo, as I looked, I saw the mist
Over the channel curl and twist,
And blot the breaker out of sight
Where its angry horn gored the waters white.
Only a sea-turn, I heard them say,
That the climbing sun will burn away;
But I saw it silently settling down
Like an ashen pall upon the town.
Oh, hush! I cried; 't is some huge storm's rack!
My darlings, my darlings, will never come back!

All day I stood on the old sea-wall,
Watching the great swell rise and fall;
And the spume and spray drove far and thin,
But never a sail came staggering in.
And out of the east a wet wind blew,
And over my head the foam-flakes flew;
Down came the night without a star,
Loud was the cry of the raging bar;
And I wrung my hands, and called, and prayed,
And the black wild east all answer made.

Oh, long ere the cruel night was done
Came the muffled toll of the minute gun;
Nothing it meant to me, I knew,
Save that other women were waiting too;
For many the craft that, cast away,
On the shoals of the long Plum Island lay,
Wrecked and naked, a hungry horde
Of fierce white surges leaping aboard;
And bale and bundle came up from the sea,
But nothing ever came back to me.

And though every pool where the full tides toss
I search for some lock of curling floss,
Yet still in my window, night by night,
The little candle is burning bright;
For, oh, if I suddenly turned to meet
My darlings coming with flying feet,
While I in the place they left me sat,
No greater marvel 't would be than that
When so softly, so slowly, stole up from the sea
The day that brought my dole to me!

TWAIN.

Once they were one, as the light is,
Whose colors are seven,
Whose source is the ancient of ancients,
Whose splendor fills heaven.

And as blossoms are bright in the sunshine,
Birds build, and bees murmur,
So all things took root in their gladness,
Grew greater and firmer.

But now! Have you looked on two shadows
Two storm-clouds are urging
Over wastes of disaster and ruin
That tempests are scourging?

Ah, as utterly twain as such shadows
Are they, in whose gladness
All things that were glad now are fallen
The wreck of their madness!

Sad souls, that were able to torture
Such pangs from such blisses,
Shall the years after death ever bring you
No nearer than this is?

Shall the red rose of love fail to bourgeon
In fields always sunny,
And the flower whose thorns had your hearts'
blood
Refuse you its honey?

ALI.

Hot smoked the hills, a sultry breath;
Hot lay the city underneath.
The tired slaves dropped from the hand
The heavy peacock plumes they fanned;
Or brought, with languid step and slow,
The lavendered and sugared snow;
Or swept aside, fold over fold,
The curtains of the cloth of gold,
Where lay the king, with fevered mouth,
In his pavilion to the south.

When, like the answer to some prayer,
Crept a soft rustle on the air,
Up from the gardens stole a breeze
Across the gilded lattices,
And waved the perfumed fountains' flow
Like shining ribbons to and fro;
And sighed across the king's repose
The breath of jasmine and of rose,

The fragrance of the falling fruit;
And brought the tinkle of a lute,
Brought the low song, and brought the stir
Of happy voices praising her
Who sang, and brought, recurring slow,
A far faint cry, a wail of woe.

The monarch turned him in his ease, —
Again that plaint his dream to tease!
Long as the pleasant wind should blow,
That far faint cry, that wail of woe!
Again it came across the noon,
And jarred upon the joyous tune,
And hushed the warbling flute and fret,
Where, underneath their golden net,
The singing birds sprang airily
From myrtle bough and citron-tree;
And as the music welled anew,
The melancholy note came too,
And mingled in discordant strain
This world of bliss, that world of pain.
"Fetch me the wretch!" cried Haroun then;
"Fetch me that wretchedest of men,
Who lifts, to vex the soul in me,
His pipe of petty misery!

Shall such a base and trivial thing
Prevent my peace, and I be king?"

"Let thy slave speak," a voice replied.
"By the king's word one will have died
Before this shining day grows dim, —
'T is Ali's women mourning him."

Upon his silken cushions then
The king his slumber sought again;
But far away all slumber kept
The while those wailing women wept.
Dull to his sense the sweet sounds came,
And dark the sunshine's fragrant flame, —
Dark as the shameful day should be
That set on Ali's treachery.
"Let music cease, let none be glad!"
The eunuch cried. "The king is sad.
But hither bid the Jew, to sing,
And satisfy my lord the king,
Out of the ancient songs he knows
Of prophets prophesying woes."

And the Jew sang: "O king! the air
Blows o'er the fair earth everywhere,

And blows again. From day to day
The sun sheds his eternal ray.
Stars rise and set, but every night
The same, their terrible white light
Searching the little soul of man
Born of a woman, and a span
Measures whose being, scarce less brief
Than the space left the dancing leaf.
The beauty of the world remains;
But man, with all his pride and pains,
Is but a smoke, — ay, like the breath
Of his own nostril vanisheth.
The generations go their ways;
A pinch of dust is all that stays, —
A pinch of dust that idle air
Blows o'er the fair earth everywhere.

"Build thee thy palace. Let the doors
Be cedarn, and of brass the floors;
And let thy purple curtains swing
Their cunning work, thy fountains fling
Their silver waters; have thy fill
Of milk and honey from the hill,
While moon-faced damsels round thee sing,—
One day thou art not, thou, O king!

"Build thee thy tomb. Of mountain rock
Fashion its members, that they mock
Time's thrusts, and overlay its arch
In gold to stay an army's march,
And carve the crypt out for thy bones,
And lay the walks in pleasant stones,
And wrap round thy magnificence
Aloes and myrrh and frankincense,
And light thy lamp. At last the sod
Some laborer turns, himself a clod,
Within its tangled roots and mould
All that is left of thee shall hold.

"Where are the kings long dead? Their tombs
Are overgrown with bitter blooms.
There is no king, there is no slave,
Nor work, nor wisdom, in the grave.
The lice that plagued th' Egyptian day,
Man were more pitiable than they,
If one thing passed not these vain things, —
The mercy of the King of kings."
And the Jew sang, "O king! thus saith
The Lord of life, the Lord of death."

Propped upon either hand, Haroun
Gazed wide-eyed on the vacant noon,
Listening; then rent his scarf, and cried:
"What boots it that my land is wide;
That my victorious armies go
Only to meet a crawling foe;
That Justice sits upon my seat,
With the drawn sword beneath her feet;
That all my palaces are fair
In pillared arches everywhere,
Set all in gold and precious stones
And carven ivory of thrones,
Beneath the shade of branching palms,
Among the gardens and their balms?
Why do I watch the almonds shake,
Day long, their blossoms in the lake,
Or take my pleasure in the court
To see the laughing children sport,
Rose-limbed, in all their dimpled pranks,
Within the shallow water tanks?
Why do my dancers make delight,
When the pale cressets throw at night
Long lights on the delicious dusk
Heavy with ambergris and musk,

While softly steals the liquid note,
Shaking the nightingale's pure throat,
Then mounts to some ecstatic height
As a wing beats when lost in light?
What joyance should I take in love?
Why should my blood the swifter move
When over me the white slave bends,
The gold-haired woman Venice sends
From the far isles beyond the sea?
What blessedness in these can be,
When to no end I draw my breath
But loathsome and disgusting death,
That holds me beggared in his thrall,
Till nothing is the close of all?
The stars shall keep their awful place,
But I and all my mighty race
Are but a song when sound has fled,
Cease like a story that is said.
Accurst the day when I was born,
The purple night, the melting morn!
Accurst the breast whereon I lay!
Accurst this handful of red clay!
Haroun is but some meanest thing, —
O dust and ashes, you are king!"

And the king wept. And through the place
Crept silence for a little space,
Till once more came, recurring slow,
That far faint cry, that wail of woe.
"What!" whispered Haroun; "weep they still
That Ali suffers the king's will?
Is the slight remnant of his year
So little worth, yet worth a tear?
And can the breaking heart so praise
The nothingness of length of days?
Bid the sound cease!" he cried. "Give o'er!
I never was a king before.
Here I defy the powers that slay!
The breath upon the lip I stay!
Are life and death the king's to give?
Bring Ali forth! Let the worm live!"

AGATHA'S SONG.

Sooner or later, the storms shall beat
Over my slumber from head to feet;
Sooner or later, the winds shall rave
In the long grass above my grave.

I shall not heed them where I lie,
Nothing their sound shall signify;
Nothing the head-stone's fret of rain,
Nothing to me the dark day's pain.

Sooner or later, the sun shall shine
With tender warmth on that mound of mine;
Sooner or later, in summer air,
Clover and violet blossom there.

I shall not feel in that deep-laid rest
The sheeted light fall over my breast;
Nor ever note in those hidden hours
The wind-blown breath of the tossing flowers.

Sooner or later, the stainless snows
Shall add their hush to my mute repose;
Sooner or later shall slant and shift
And heap my bed with their dazzling drift.

Chill though that frozen pall shall seem,
Its touch no colder can make the dream
That recks not the sweet and sacred dread
Shrouding the city of the dead.

Sooner or later, the bee shall come
And fill the noon with his golden hum;
Sooner or later, on half-poised wing,
The bluebird's warble about me ring, —

Ring and chirrup and whistle with glee,
Nothing his music means to me;
None of these beautiful things shall know
How soundly their lover sleeps below.

Sooner or later, far out in the night,
The stars shall over me wing their flight;
Sooner or later, the answering dews
Catch the white spark in their silent ooze.

Never a ray shall part the gloom
That wraps me round in the kindly tomb;
Peace shall be perfect for lip and brow
Sooner or later, — but, oh, not now!

ESHER'S SONG.

Wild wails the wind, and blind the night and dreary,
No star abroad, no light upon the earth;
The fitful flame, of flickering grown weary,
Dead in its ash has fallen on the hearth.
Oh, cease, sad heart, your beating,
Cease your eager flight,
To no glad purpose fleeting,
To no delight!

The swollen blast comes keening up the valley,
Shuddering and sighing past my shaken door;
No summer breeze of gentle toss and dally, —
A vast black breath blown from the unknown shore!
Oh, cease, sad heart, your beating,
Cease your eager flight,
Oh, driven leaf, unweeting
Of bloom or blight!

Ah, if far out upon the screaming billow
Some mast I loved were feathered by the sea!
Or if on some wet grave I made my pillow
That held the thing that once was dear to me!
Oh, cease, sad heart, your beating,
Cease your eager flight,
No prayer of power entreating
From any height!

For desolate, for desolate and lonely,
Aimless and blind, without a wish I grope;
My mood a wan and stagnant shadow only, —
'T is not despair, for it was never hope!
Oh, cease, sad heart, your beating,
Cease your eager flight,
So sharp the storm is sleeting,
So wild the night!

MY OWN SONG.

O GLAD am I that I was born!
For who is sad when flaming morn
Bursts forth, or when the mighty night
Carries the soul from height to height!

To me, as to the child that sings,
The bird that claps his rain-washed wings,
The breeze that curls the sun-tipped flower,
Comes some new joy with each new hour.

Joy in the beauty of the earth,
Joy in the fire upon the hearth,
Joy in that potency of love
In which I live and breathe and move!

Joy even in the shapeless thought
That, some day, when all tasks are wrought,
I shall explore that vasty deep
Beyond the frozen gates of sleep.

For joy attunes all beating things,
With me each rhythmic atom sings,
From glow till gloom, from murk till morn,
O glad am I that I was born !

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

What love do I bring you? The earth,
Full of love, were far lighter;
The great hollow sky, full of love,
Something slighter.

Earth full and heaven full were less
Than the full measure given;
Nay, say a heart full, — the heart
Holds earth and heaven!

VALENTINE'S DAY.

Beloved, no great birthday dawn
  Of summer tinct with spices fine,
Of sapphire skies and splendid blooms,
  Can dim the dear delight of thine!
The ardent arch of August days
May veil itself in wizard haze;
  But not in all such sweet decline
  Fate sent thee for my Valentine!

The winter weather, clear and fair,
  When all the air from stain was free,
And far and blue the still sky soared
  O'er lands of calm from hill to sea;
While deepening sunsets long and low
Ebbed ruddier over blushing snow, —
  That winter weather summoned thee
  To life itself, to life and me.

How clean the land reposed! How pure
  From sky to sky its spotless white!

What promise in the beckoning day,
What mystery in alluring night!
Oh, up what depths of violet dark
The crystal stars leaned forth to mark
How forests felt the ice-sheathed flight
Of rivers rushing to the light!

O love! thy soul was like the earth
Wrapped so serenely in its snows;
And by and by such searching sun,
And by and by such south wind blows!
From dreams divine in odorous cells
Waken at length the wild flower bells;
The sacred haunts their wealth disclose,
And widely blooms the perfect rose!

Clear eyes that opened on the world,
Your dusky wells received what cheer?
How couldst thou twice the twelvemonth live
Before my soul was kindled, dear?
Where was I, darling, in those days, —
Those tender twice-returning days, —
When eagerly thou met'st the year,
When life was glad and I not here?

Strange, shadowy time, ere I had made
A tone in the sphere's harmony!
Yet source of those immortal things
That blend love with infinity.
I am an attribute of thine:
Came with thy senses rare and fine,
Stay while those powers most regal be,
Die when thou hast no need of me.

No need of me? The airs shall fail,
Streams be forgotten by the sea,
Red autumn paint no country-side,
The wintry weather cease to be,
But thou and I shall part no more;
The heavens shall reel from earth before,
The constant sun to death may flee,
And yet thou shalt have need of me!

THE RIVER.

Your life and mine, O constant heart, have glided
Like two streams into one;
We flow along, — and now our way is guided
In shade, and now in sun.

For miles I wandered through the placid meadow
Wide stretching to the sky;
In me the wild-flower watched his painted shadow, —
In me the cloud on high.

But you on the great hillside freshly bubbled,
By secret sluices sent
From some deep source in the rock's heart untroubled,
Where sunbeam never bent.

Into the glad, free ether you came leaping ;
The sunshine heard your tone,
And o'er the crested spur your wild way sweeping,
It made you all its own.

Sunshine, or streamlet, or the fleece of heaven ?
The valleys upward creep,
Till your far voice beneath the starry seven
Falls singing them to sleep.

Still o'er the lofty ledges lightly dashing,
The echoes round you play ;
The morning radiance in your trail is flashing,
Wild roses catch your spray.

All noontide lustre and all sylvan fragrance
About you brood and blow ;
The late chill moonbeams come as pallid vagrants
To reach earth gladlier so.

By night, a shining thread of music flowing
The clear dark sky along,
The stars about you sparkling, dipping, going,
Dreams floating down your song, —

By day and night, to your advancing murmur
The crystal in his niche
Gathers; the sapling bends to you, and firmer
Plants him, and grows more rich.

The plains, below, a royal sward are keeping
For your white feet to chide,
O joyous brook, that, out of heaven leaping,
Comes wandering to my side.

Long seasons now, with sunshine in our shallows,
Green glooming o'er our deeps,
We wind, where under lea of fertile fallows
Perpetual summer sleeps.

Upon our trace we fling a foam of blossom,
The showers trend down our way,

The sacred azure darkens in our bosom,
The landscapes toward us sway.

Deeper the channel wears, and ever broader
From the exhaustless wells
The rhythmic tides, in their mysterious order,
Slide on slow silvery swells.

A gracious stream, whose banks are set with blessing,
That under tranquil skies
And into calms of golden sunset pressing
On the horizon dies, —

Or drawn to seek the gray and wondrous fountains,
Far sounding, shall it be,
A river rushing between mighty mountains
We burst upon the sea?

The hoary and illimitable ocean,
That darkly to and fro
Rocks the vast volumes of its central motion
Where no wind dares to blow!

O life my own, let not that awful swinging
Sunder us far apart,
But the eternities confess our clinging,
And pulse us heart to heart!

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09938 954 4